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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as indicated below.

1. (Cancelled)

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2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~1~~ 4, further comprising the step of allowing said software component to access an external environment only through said output port.

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3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~1~~ 4, further comprising the step of allowing a client to access said software component only through said input port.

4. (Currently Amended) A method for programming a software component, said method comprising the steps of:

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defining properties of said software component, including at least one input port and at least one output port; and

providing a software mechanism for instantiating said software component; and

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utilizing an attach command to attach at least one of said at least one input port to a class.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

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7. (Cancelled)

8. (Withdrawn) A method for posting a message to a group, said method comprising the steps of:

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defining properties of at least one software component, including at least one input port and at least one output port;

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registering said software component with said group; and
providing a message posted to said group to each of the software
components that have registered with said group.

5 9. (Cancelled)

10 10. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9 12, wherein said
processor is further configured to allow said software component to access an external
environment only through said output port.

11. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9 12, wherein said
processor is further configured to allow a client to access said software component only
through said input port.

15 12. (Currently Amended) A system for programming a software
component, said system comprising:

a memory that stores computer-readable code; and

a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured
to implement said computer-readable code, said computer-readable code configured to:

20 define properties of said software component, including at least one input
port and at least one output port; and

provide a software mechanism for instantiating said software component;

and

25 utilize an attach command to attach at least one of said at least one input
port to a class.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

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15. (Cancelled)

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16. (Withdrawn) A system for posting a message to a group, said system comprising:

- a memory that stores computer-readable code; and
- 5 a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured to implement said computer-readable code, said computer-readable code configured to:
 - define properties of at least one software component, including at least one input port and at least one output port;
 - register said software component with said group; and
 - 10 provide a message posted to said group to each of the software components that have registered with said group.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture for programming a software component, said system comprising:

- a computer readable medium having computer readable code means embodied thereon, said computer readable program code means comprising:
 - a step to define properties of said software component, including at least
 - 20 one input port and at least one output port; and
 - a step to provide a software mechanism for instantiating said software component; and
 - a step to utilize an attach command to attach at least one of said at least one input port to a class.

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19. (Cancelled)

20. (Withdrawn) An article of manufacture for posting a message to a group, said system comprising:

- 30 a computer readable medium having computer readable code means embodied thereon, said computer readable program code means comprising:

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a step to define properties of at least one software component, including at least one input port and at least one output port;

a step to register said software component with said group; and

a step to provide a message posted to said group to each of the software
5 components that have registered with said group.